

Program Operations Safety: Transportation Safety (Video 2)

[Music]

Dr. Phyllis Agran: Hello. I'm Doctor Phyllis Agran. I'll be your host for this episode of "Keeping Them Safe." Today's topic is transportation safety. If you choose to offer transportation for children, you have a unique role in preventing injuries and deaths. Statistics have shown that motor vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death among children in the United States. In our time together, we will cover five topics that will help your program staff understand transportation safety. Regulations or requirements may vary greatly by state or locality, so it is important to follow your local or state regulations. "Caring for Our Children" is a collection of best practice standards for early care and education programs. We will be referring to these recommendations as we talk about each topic. For more in-depth information about any of these strategies, please visit the video page.

Our first topic is qualifications of drivers. Driving children is a significant responsibility. Choosing the most qualified driver is key to keeping children safe and transporting them. Your program must ensure that anyone who drives children has a safe driving record and meets your state's licensing requirements. When driving a bus or other commercial vehicle, drivers must have a proper commercial license for the vehicle they are operating. It is also important for you to verify that the driver does not have a medical condition that could affect their driving or their ability to carry out the evacuation procedures.

Next, we will discuss child passenger safety. When used properly, car seats and seat belts can reduce the likelihood of serious injury or death if the vehicle is involved in a crash. The risk of death is lowered by 71% for children under a year old and by 54% for children ages 1 to 4. The message is simple: Car seats save lives. Here are three car seat safety tips: Transport children only in a developmentally appropriate car seat that is suited for their weight, age, and psychological development; make sure to be aware of and follow your own state laws and regulations; car seats should be installed and used according to the manufacturer's instructions; secure car seats in the back seat only. It is recommended that infants, toddlers, and preschoolers ride rear facing until they have reached the seat's maximum height or weight requirement. This may be beyond the age of 2.

Now, let's talk about direct supervision of children in vehicles. Drivers must be able to focus entirely on driving the vehicle, so supervision of children is the responsibility of teachers and caregivers who are traveling in the vehicle. Deaths have occurred when children were mistakenly left in vehicles, so you should thoroughly check the vehicle before leaving it. An effective strategy for counting children is to do a face to name count at least four times: prior to leaving for a destination, when the destination is reached, before departing for return, and upon return. It is important that you maintain licensed regulated child-to-staff ratios for all transportation. Drivers are not included in this ratio, so there should always be at least two

adults in the vehicle. Do not leave children unattended in or around a vehicle. As you can see, your supervision is key in keeping children safe.

Our next topic covers the interior temperature of vehicles. Children's bodies overheat three to five times faster than adults because the parts of their brain that control body temperatures are not as developed as adults. Excessively high temperatures in vehicles can cause neurological damage in children. About 37 children die every year when left in vehicles that quickly heat up. The interior of cars and buses should be maintained at a temperature that is comfortable to children, not to the adults. Ask the children if they are too hot or too cold. If you are unsure of how hot or cold your vehicle is, use the thermometer inside the vehicle. For more information, refer to the specific CFOC standards.

Finally, we will discuss the use of 15-passenger vans for transporting children. These vans are more likely to be involved in a rollover crash due to their high center of gravity. CFOC standards state that early care and education programs should avoid the use of 15-passenger vans. For more information and recommendations on transportation practices, search the "Caring for Our Children" resource under the topic of transportation safety. At the end of this episode, you can also check out additional resources and training materials on the video page.

It is important for you to develop clear plans, policies, and practices that can be carried out by all staff within your program related to transportation. You may consider providing training regularly to staff on ratios, car seat safety, and the expectations for direct supervision of children while transporting. Our time's almost up, but here's a couple of questions for you to consider. What policies and plans do you have in place around how to keep children safe when they are being transported? And second, how do you ensure that all staff who supervise children are aware of your program's policies and practices around transportation safety?

Thank you for spending this time with me. Please join us for another episode of "Keeping them Safe." Remember, the more you learn, the safer they are.

[Music]